

Parenting in Hard Times: 10 Things to Keep in Mind

Did you get the manual for parenting in hard times? Don't worry—we didn't either.

The good news is we can take care of our kids without having all the answers. What matters most is kids being able to lean on an adult who will be their answer to comfort, contact, and closeness.

1. Lead

Be the calm in the storm. Show children how to handle big emotions in a caring way so they trust and follow your lead.

2. Collect

Deepen your relationship by engaging your child warmly. Listen with full attention and focus on what matters to them.

3. Structure

Provide routines and predictability to help children feel secure and supported through change.

4. Frustration

Expect more frustration and upset. Give space for play or tears—hard times bring big feelings.

5. Play

Play helps release emotions when words are not enough. It is essential for emotional processing.

6. School

Focus on emotional safety over performance. Learning will follow when children feel secure.

7. Screens

Avoid over-reliance on screens. Encourage connection and real-world play experiences.

8. Bridge

Help children stay connected to what they miss by talking, sharing memories, or connecting virtually.

9. Space

Allow time for rest and quiet. Everyone needs more downtime during stressful periods.

10. Guilt

Let go of guilt. You are doing your best—emotions will settle and you will find your way forward.

No one has all the answers in times of stress and change. Focus on connection, allowing space for emotions, and supporting your child with care and presence.

Source: Source: Adapted from Parenting in Hard Times
Infographic

Dr. Deborah MacNamara - Excerpt from the book Rest, Play, Grow: Making Sense of Preschoolers (or anyone who acts like one)